Identifying value for money: “what works” in public health

Dr Laura Haynes, Head of Policy Research

CabinetOffice
Behavioural Insights Team

(Some) key steps to achieving VfM

CabinetOffice
Behavioural Insights Team

1. Identify local priorities

(Some) key steps to achieving VfM

CabinetOffice
Behavioural Insights Team

1. Identify local priorities

2. Implement programs to address them

(Some) key steps to achieving VfM

CabinetOffice
Behavioural Insights Team

1. Identify local priorities
2. Implement programs to address them
3. Measure impact

(Some) key steps to achieving VfM

CabinetOffice
Behavioural Insights Team

1. Identify local priorities
2. Implement programs to address them
3. Measure impact
4. Adapt priorities/programs as necessary

(Some) key steps to achieving VfM

CabinetOffice
Behavioural Insights Team

1. Identify local priorities

   High quality data

2. Implement programs to address them

3. Measure impact

3. Adapt priorities/programs as necessary

(Some) key steps to achieving VfM

CabinetOffice
Behavioural Insights Team

1. Identify local priorities

   High quality data

2. Implement programs to address them

   Good use of good evidence

3. Measure impact

3. Adapt priorities/programs as necessary

(Some) key steps to achieving VfM

CabinetOffice
Behavioural Insights Team

1. Identify local priorities

   High quality data

2. Implement programs to address them

   Good use of good evidence

3. Measure impact

   Rigorous methods & high quality data

3. Adapt priorities/programs as necessary

(Some) key steps to achieving VfM

CabinetOffice
Behavioural Insights Team

1. Identify local priorities

   High quality data

2. Implement programs to address them

   Good use of good evidence

3. Measure impact

   Rigorous methods & high quality data

3. Adapt priorities/programs as necessary

   Feedback loops

(Some) key steps to achieving VfM

CabinetOffice
Behavioural Insights Team

1. Identify local priorities

   High quality data

2. Implement programs to address them

   Good use of good evidence

3. Measure impact

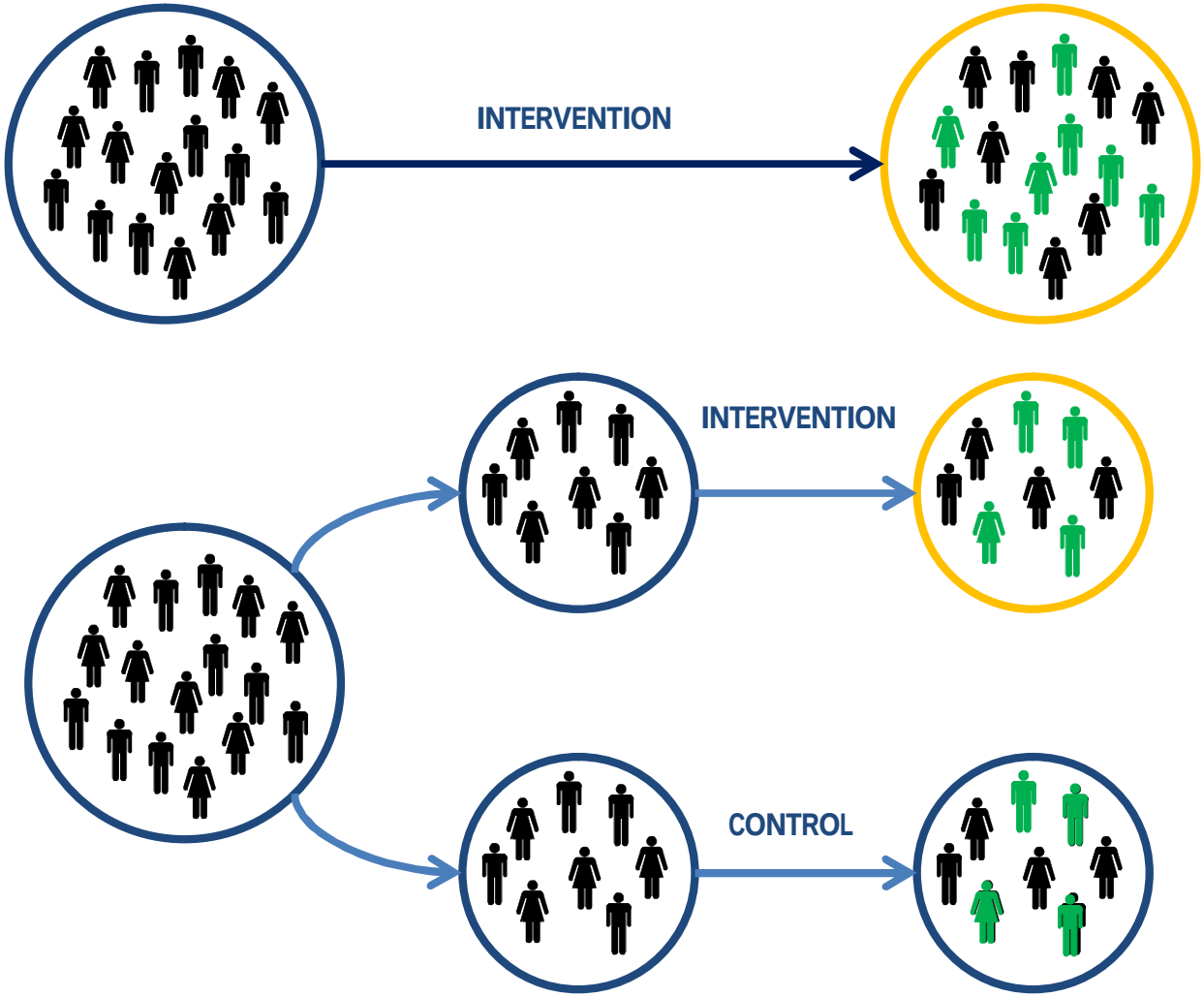
   Rigorous methods & high quality data

3. Adapt priorities/programs as necessary

   Feedback loops

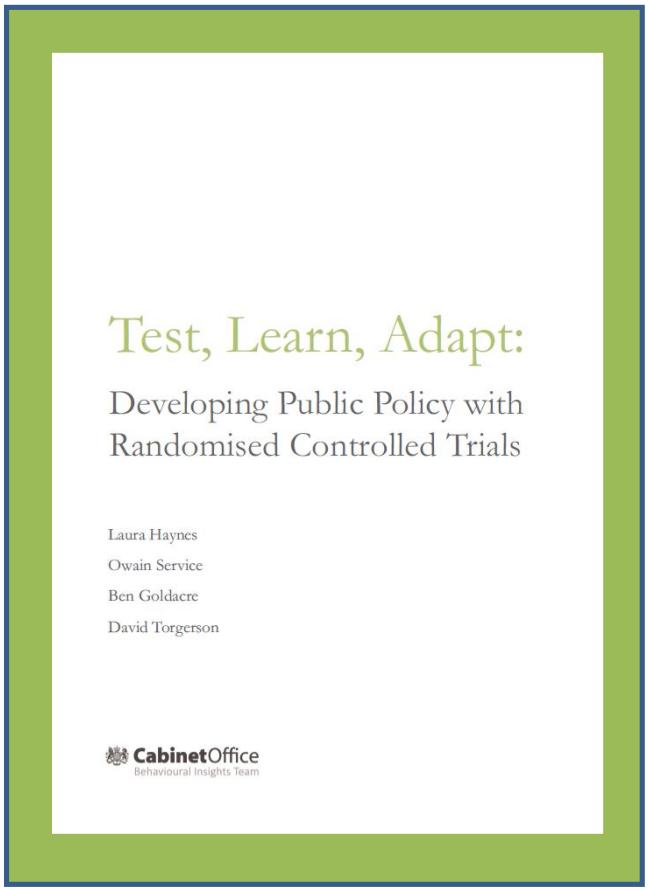
Randomised trials – establishing the counterfactual

CabinetOffice
Behavioural Insights Team



Randomised controlled trials in public policy

CabinetOffice
Behavioural Insights Team


Test, Learn, Adapt:

Developing Public Policy with Randomised Controlled Trials

Laura Haynes
Owain Service
Ben Goldacre
David Torgerson

CabinetOffice
Behavioural Insights Team

Test, Learn, Adapt

CabinetOffice
Behavioural Insights Team

- What are RCTs and why are they important?
- The case for RCTs – debunking some myths
  1. We already know "what works"
  2. RCTs cost a lot of money
  3. RCTs have ethical disadvantages
  4. RCTs are complicated and difficult to run
- Conducting RCTs – 9 key steps

What does testing mean?

- empirical comparison of alternatives
- alternatives:

  different policies, delivery mechanisms, service user experiences, marketing messages, communication channels

When can this approach be used?

- business as usual
- in advance of policy design/launch/delivery
- as part of evaluation
- natural experiments

Testing in the field

CabinetOffice
Behavioural Insights Team

How complex/costly is it?

- dependent on policy area / outcome proxies
- flexibility of infrastructure to accommodate variations
- monitoring of outcomes using existing data sources
- aligning incentives around “what works”

..... how costly is it if we don’t use RCTs?

Keeping costs low though collaboration

CabinetOffice
Behavioural Insights Team

- Central government
- Local authorities
- Commissioning bodies
- Private sector providers
- Academia

All asking similar questions in different ways

An opportunity to work together to find out the answers

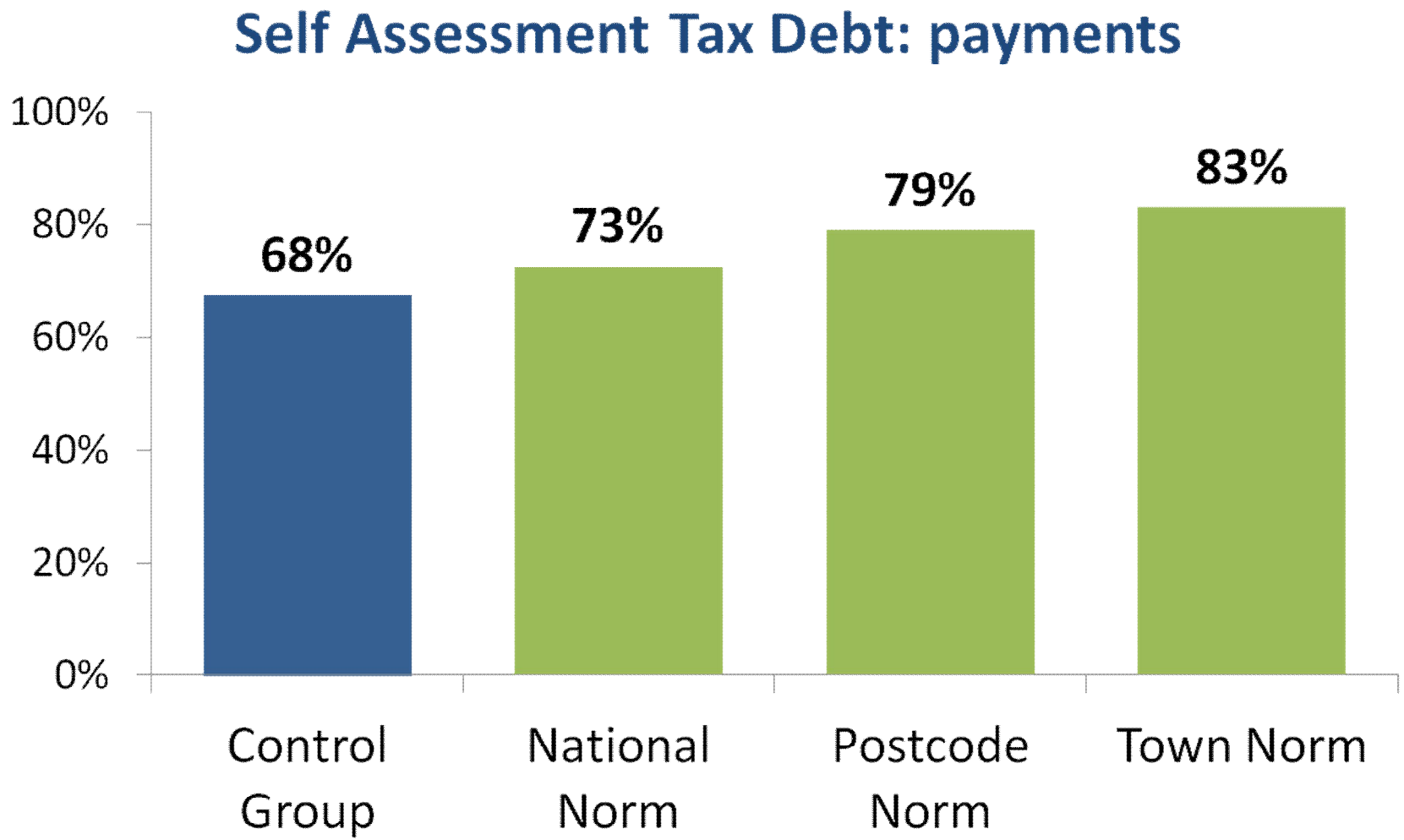
Behavioural Insights Team: trials

CabinetOffice
Behavioural Insights Team

- Health
- Energy/environment
- Fraud/error/debt
- Employment
- Business growth
- Charitable giving
- Electoral registration

Applying descriptive social norms to tax debt

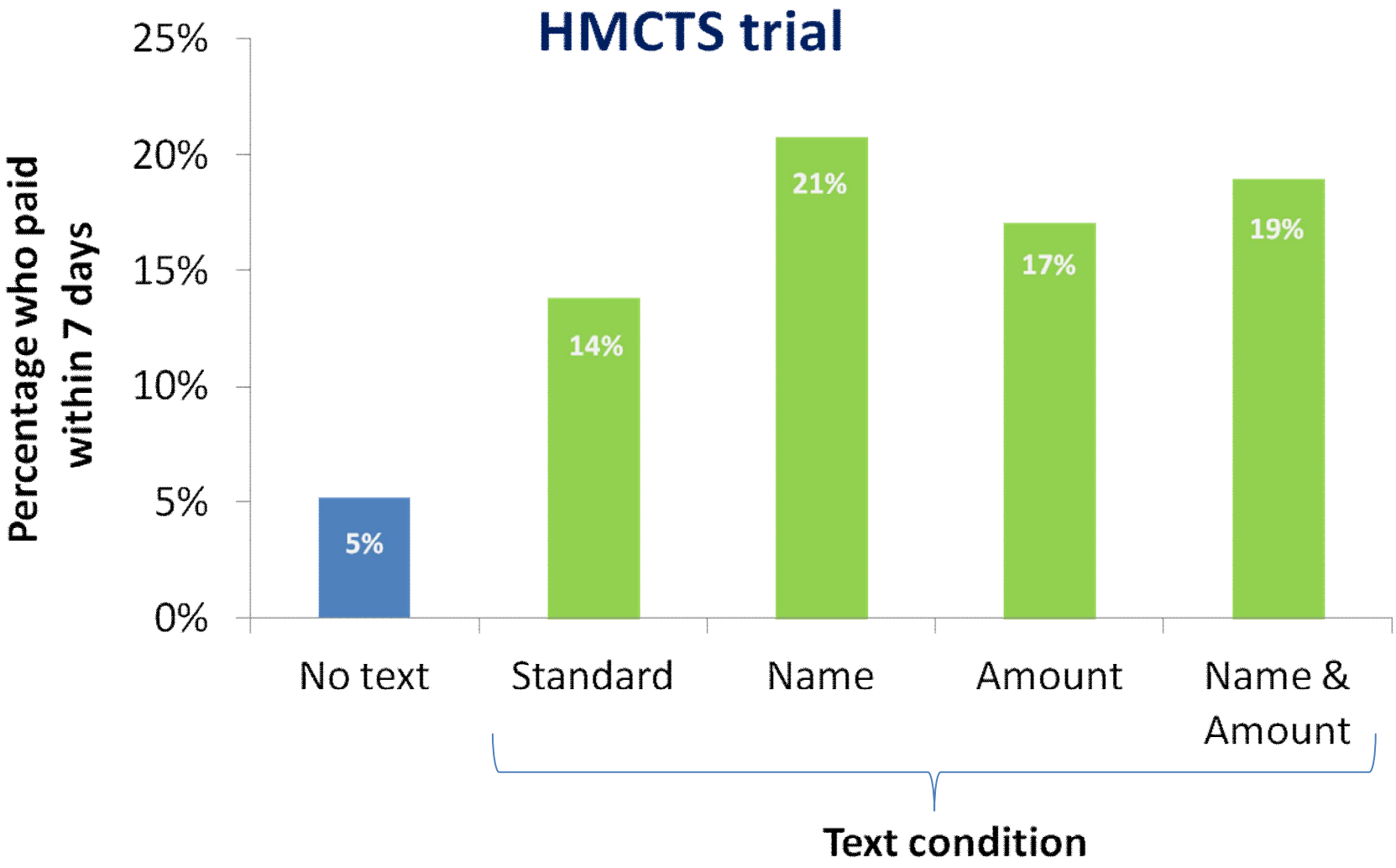
CabinetOffice
Behavioural Insights Team



Source: Behavioural Insights Team & HMRC, 2011

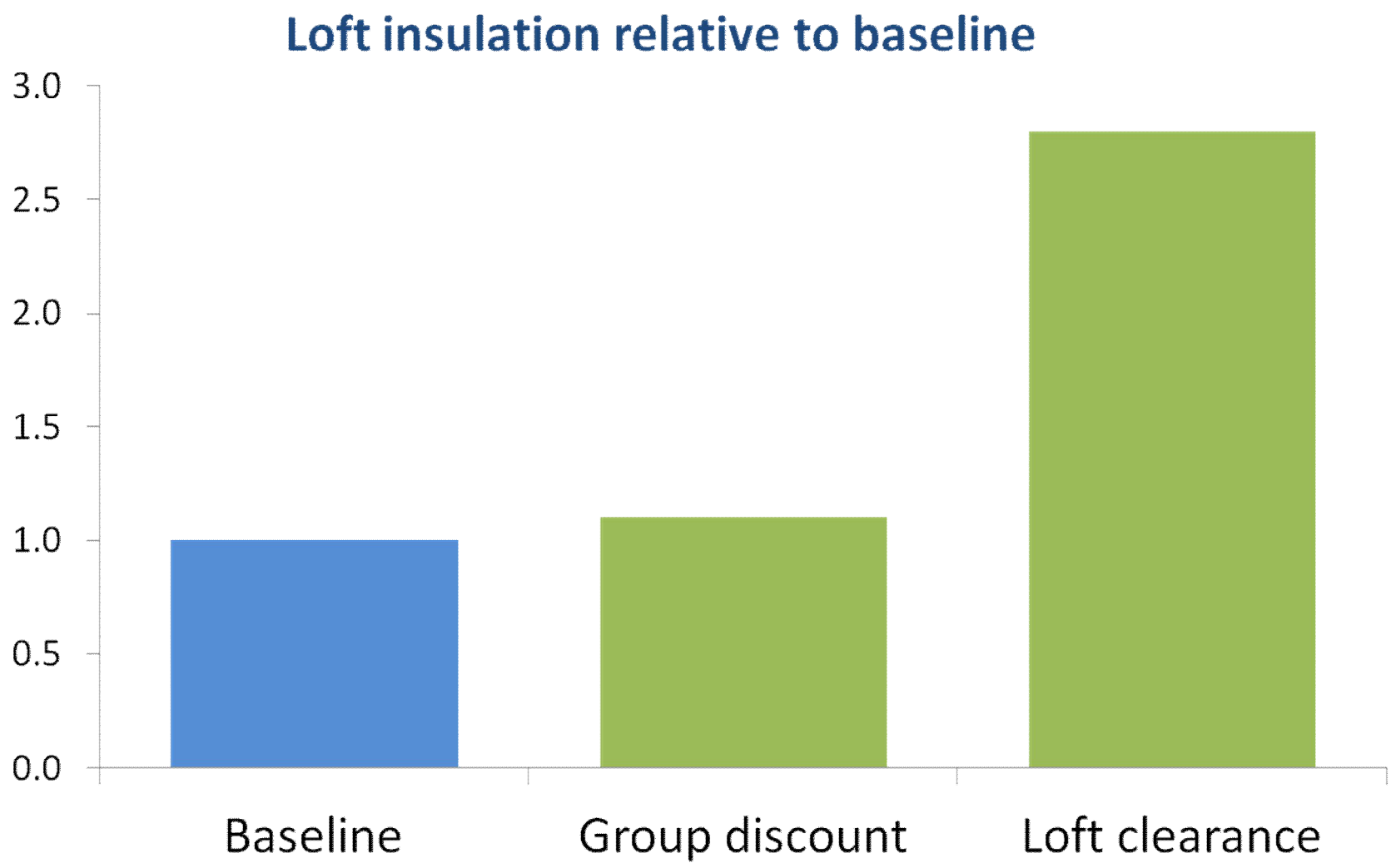
Repayment rates of overdue court fines

CabinetOffice
Behavioural Insights Team



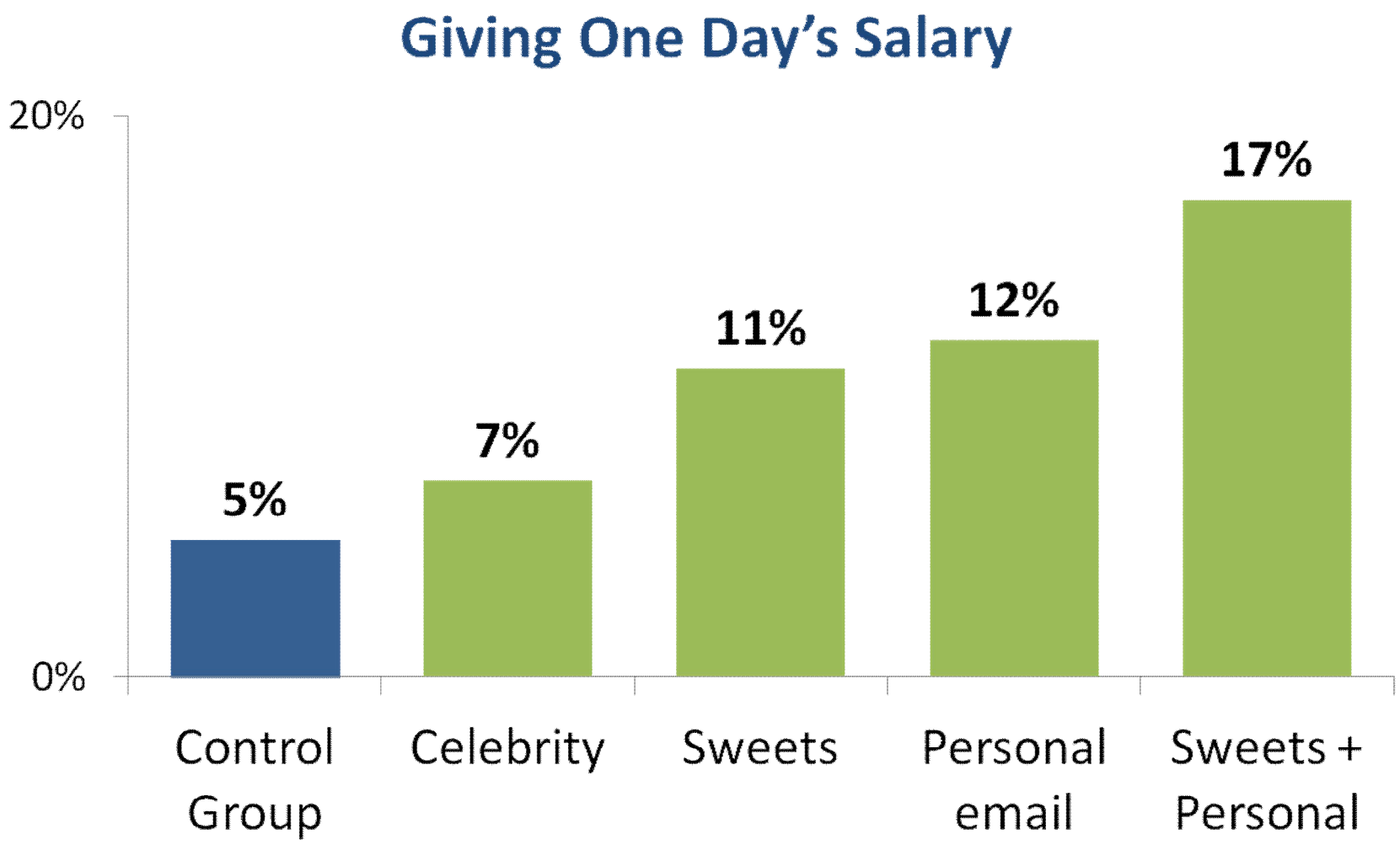
Encouraging uptake of loft insulation

CabinetOffice
Behavioural Insights Team



Charitable giving: reciprocity & personalisation

CabinetOffice
Behavioural Insights Team



Dr Laura Haynes
laura.haynes@cabinet-office.gsi.gov.uk
http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/behavioural-insights-